

An Invitation

This is an invitation to you, the reader of this document, the service provider, the consumer, the critic or the advocate, to join in a community conversation that has started at the grass roots level and is shaping Placer County's Proposition 10 planning process for early childhood development.

The Commission prepared this draft integrated plan using the strategic planning guidelines developed by the State Commission; information from an independent analysis of existing needs assessments; public comment from a series of community forums; and the results of a two-day strategic planning event. The draft plan is now open to another round of public review. As "*stewards*" of this amazing new resource for children and families in Placer County, the Commission is confident that the final plan will represent the true needs of our children and families. The final plan will also represent more than just an integrated service system and strategic deployment of Proposition 10 resources. To be effective, the plan must be understood by all mothers, fathers and extended family members and provide resources to help them nurture and care for their children whether they interact with an established service system or not.

The research that inspired Proposition 10 tells us that at birth, an infant's brain has 100 billion nerve cells, or neurons. These neurons will grow and connect with other neurons in *systems* that control various functions like seeing, hearing, moving, thinking and expressing emotion. These systems, activated by repeated experiences, provide the foundation for the brain's organization and functioning throughout life. The absence of appropriate activation results in the lack of development or the disappearance of these connections. Much like the system that develops in the young child's brain so too change and growth are occurring in the network of supports for families in Placer County. Families currently rely on informal and formal systems of support in raising their children. We are committed to ensuring that every family has access to the support they need. We encourage the creation of enriching environments for all children and the development of friendships and networks among parents and families. This informal network of support is backed up by an organized system of services available to families. We are intent on moving from a service system fragmented by categorical funding, and the competition for those funds, which pits interests against each other and dissipates the system, to a holistic healthy system. This service system reinforces the areas in which families are thriving and fills in the gaps in a family's network of support. We are building connections as we go. In order for those connections to be strong, we need to use them. This plan builds upon the current system to strengthen existing connections, and suggests new connections *and community partnership competencies* necessary to sustain an integrated network of family friendly services.

This plan is innovative yet grounded in sound community input and best practices. It provides solid strategic directions, but there still much work to do. Like the young child's brain, there is room for growth, and paring back. There may be a need to prioritize. And, whole new connections and strategies may emerge from the public review process. Your insights are important so please, take some time and read this draft plan. Participate in the public review process and send in your written comments. Together, let us, the *whole system* build on this platform and decide what we need to do now, and in the future for the positive development and growth of *Our Children*."

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AN INTEGRATED PLAN

For The

Strategic Deployment of Proposition 10 Resources in Placer County

June 14, 2000

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision	1
Mission	1
Strategic Principles	1
The Process used in developing our Integrated Plan	2-5
Review of Current Data	3
Community Learning Conversations	3-4
An Inclusive Strategic Planning Gathering	5
An Integrated County-Wide Partnership Approach	5-6
Strategic Result #1: Improved Family Functioning	6-8
Improved Family Competencies	7
County-Wide Benchmarks	7
Recommended Strategies	7
Program Performance Measures	7
Outcome: Supportive and Nurturing Living Environment	7
County-Wide Benchmarks	8
Recommended Strategies	8
Program Performance Measures	8
Strategic Result #2: Improved Child Development	8-10
Outcome: Children meeting developmental milestones	9
County-Wide Benchmarks	9
Recommended Strategies	9
Program Performance Measures	9
Outcome: Children are in nurturing environments that promote learning	9
County-Wide Benchmarks	9
Recommended Strategies	9
Program Performance Measures	10
Strategic Result #3: All Children are Healthy	10-12
Outcome: Family Wellness Competency	10
County-Wide Benchmarks	10
Recommended Strategies	11
Program Performance Measures	11
Outcome: Healthy Environment	12
County-Wide Benchmarks	12
Recommended Strategies	12
Program Performance Measures	12
Strategic Result #4: A Comprehensive Child and Family Partnership	12-13
Outcome: Partnership Competency	13
County-Wide Benchmarks	13
Recommended Strategies	13
Program Performance Measures	13
To be “Strategic” our Approaches must be Comprehensive and Integrated	13-15
An Interdisciplinary Family Team Approach	14
Strategic Deployment of Resources	15-16
Eligible Partners	16
Types of Funding	16
Additional Organizational Development Domains	16-17

**AN INTEGRATED PLAN
For The
Strategic Deployment of Proposition 10
Resources in Placer County**

VISION

The Placer Children and Families Commission believes all children are our children, therefore we shall create an environment that supports our children and their families in reaching their full potential. – Created at the Placer County Children and Families Commission Strategic Planning “Event” March, 2000

MISSION

In order to achieve our vision the Placer County Children and Families Commission will focus upon early childhood development and will support and build on existing collaborative efforts by bringing together diverse perspectives, communities, and resources to assure comprehensive integrated strategies and holistic family-centered approaches.

STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES

The statewide Children and Families Commission has identified the following strategic results:

- Improved family functioning: strong families;
- Improved child development: children learning and ready for school; and
- Improved child health: healthy children.

The ***Placer County Children and Families Commission*** commits to achieving the statewide strategic results by adopting the following strategic principles:

- All children means ALL CHILDREN, including special needs children and those children whose voices have not been heard or whose needs have not been well met in the past. When the Children and Families Commission’s (CFC) integrated plan moves forward no child will be left behind.
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The CFC through its plan and actions will promote “holistic” approaches involving comprehensive outcomes for whole children in whole families in whole communities, rather than fund piecemeal single point or isolated approaches.

- Comprehensive and integrated approaches will require cross-agency planning, assessment training, service delivery, and outcome linkages between multiple providers, supporters, and agencies that all bring their unique service specialties together through collaboration.
- Holistic family approaches will include working with non-traditional partners. Faith-based organizations, parent networks, enrichment activity providers and others who support the healthy development of children and families are critical partners in achieving the goals of this plan.
- Planning and service delivery partners should bear in mind the big picture spanning all perspectives, rather than focus only on their particular piece or specialized portion of the strategic plan.
- Unmet needs are the result of the lack of resources or poor prioritization of existing resources, and by fragmentation among public and private service providers. Solutions must address the need to fill gaps and the need to create collaborative linkages throughout the continuum of support and care.
- The CFC integrated plan is an important and refreshing new initiative in the continuing history of strategic collaboration and service integration in Placer County. It is neither the first nor the only strategic plan in Placer County, nor should it operate independently of the various other strategic initiatives already in place.

- Strategies contained in the CFC integrated plan upon, strengthen, expand, and help leverage children age zero to five and their families, rather than be used as an independent or disconnected new resource.
- The integrated plan will encompass comprehensive goals, approaches, processes and outcomes for all children age zero to five and their families across the full continuum of supports and services, not just plan ways to spend CFC dollars.
- The CFC will resist pressure to improve countywide indicators by only targeting at-risk populations that generate the majority of statistics. Instead, the strategic plan should address the full range of support, prevention, early intervention, and treatment needed by all children and their families.
- The CFC integrated plan will avoid supplanting existing services or relieving agencies of their current responsibilities in serving and reaching out to children and families.
- In addition to distributing its own funds, the CFC integrated plan will identify and promote important strategic resources and solutions that don't involve CFC funds.
- Information sharing that supports appropriate and confidential sharing of information between the various partners providing holistic services and supports is central to the strategic success of the CFC initiative.
- The CFC acknowledges the lessons learned during more than ten years of comprehensive service integration and multi-agency collaboration in Placer County.

- Evaluation will be approached as a continuous *learning opportunity* to improve services and outcomes. This will be done in a partnership between the CFC and its grantee and non-grantee partners in order to discover the best approaches to achieving and sustaining comprehensive child, family, and community outcomes, rather than as a means to control or coerce service delivery partners.

THE PROCESS USED IN DEVELOPING OUR INTEGRATED PLAN

“Stewardship - The act of holding something in trust for another.”

As stewards of the unique resources made available by Proposition 10 for the long term development and well-being of children prenatal through 5 years of age, the Placer County Children and Families Commission recognized early in the planning process that to develop a truly “strategic” plan we needed to intentionally and authentically engage the community in safe learning environments and actually think strategically. What this means in terms of designing the process for identifying needs and assets is that *we not only want to see the forest before the trees, but also see the trees, the space between the trees and the flora and fauna.* It is only from this perspective that we can truly be strategic in selecting a few pivotal strategies, implementing those strategies well, and continuously evaluate our results.

Review of Current Data

To lay the groundwork for this informed and strategic community involvement in identifying issues and opportunities facing our youngest children, the Commission first reviewed the existing needs assessments and strategic planning documents developed in Placer County pertaining to children ages zero to five and their families. A consultant was retained to analyze the various reports and develop a summary that outlined key points made in each document.

This initial screening of needs assessments and plans was to use existing data and findings for several important purposes: To avoid unnecessary duplication of existing needs assessments; to respect and join current on-going child development efforts; and to distribute Proposition 10 funds wisely both in planning and in the investment in services for children and families. This path was consistent with the core questions that guide our planning: *Where are we now? Where do we want to go? How will we get there? And, how will we know we got there?*

Overall, five detailed assessments were reviewed which address various aspects of need within the zero to five population. The full report to the Commission is included as Attachment A. The reports analyzed were:

- Tahoe-Truckee Children's Network Community Health Assessment and Evaluation
- Maternal and Child Health Needs Assessment and Plan
- Child Care and Development Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan
- Placer Community Action Council/Early HeadStart – Community Needs Assessment
- Greater Collaborative – By The Numbers – Source Book on Health Indicators

From this study of existing key needs assessment findings and strategic plan goals the Commission learned that:

“Overall, the bulk of needs assessment data needed to launch the Children and Families Commission strategic planning effort already exist and are available in five major sets of documents. These data are spread across multiple planning documents and comprise more than 700 pages of detailed information and discussion. Some details are missing and some old data need to be updated. Each document presents its findings in a distinct format, none of which follow the Proposition 10 guidelines, although local documents represent the perspectives and positions of people and organizations in Placer County already engaged in child development initiatives. In addition to documented data, the current personal perspectives and interests of people who know about and/or use child development resources and services may need to be collected to refresh and flesh out the empirical data that are contained in existing needs assessments documents.” – David Gray, Summary of Existing Needs Assessments, February 2000

This analysis revealed that, at least for now, there is no need to do yet another 0-5 needs assessment in Placer County. Instead, we needed to put time and resources into hearing the “community voice” and match that voice, experience and wisdom with the statistical data available to us. Through this process we got a sense of what we really need to do in Placer County and what infrastructure exists that we could build on.

Community Learning Conversations

“Once society loses its capacity to dialogue, all that is left is a cacophony of voices battling it out to see who wins and who loses. There is no capacity to go deeper, to find a deeper meaning that transcends individual views and self-interest.” – Peter Senge in Reflections on Leadership.

To facilitate this “civic dialogue,” we partnered with the Placer County Greater Collaborative, the Placer County Child Care Advisory Council, and the United Way Success By Six to convene a series of twelve community “learning conversations” that were held in all major geographic areas of the county. These forums were convened from January through March, 2000.

The forums were advertised in the media and through the formal and informal information network that operates within the county. These gatherings were held in the early evenings and at times when existing focus groups normally met. Child care and light refreshments were available at all forums.

Over 200 people representing a diverse cross section of our community attended the forums. The representation spanned the range of income levels, culture, ethnicity, education and geography. People from business, government, parent organizations, teenagers, special interest groups, parents of special needs children, services providers and funding organizations all participated equally. Although there were many different perspectives voiced, eventually one thread ended up bonding these people together: At the heart of it, we all have a passion for the well being and positive development of our youngest children, especially when it comes to the child nurturing and family support needed to promote optimum brain growth.

The intent of the forums was to start an in-depth conversation about early childhood development in our county. The conversations were initiated by providing information on the local Children and Families Commission, and an invitation to participate in this great opportunity afforded by Proposition 10. A video “Food For Thought” was used to spark the dialogue.

The video provides information on the tremendous amount of neurological growth that happens during the first years of life. Key learnings from the videos “The Ten Things Every Child Needs” and “The First Years Last Forever” augmented this information.

Following the presentation and the video, a facilitated dialogue or “focused conversation” was held with the group. The Focused Conversation Method was developed by The Institute of Cultural Affairs and is designed to enable a group to examine a subject at increasingly deeper levels of understanding.

A trained ICA facilitator guided the conversations. Following the conversations, each group was invited to provide their informed input on the theme: *What are the needs and resources we must consider in developing a strategic plan for early childhood development in Placer County?* The group was invited to post their ideas in answer to three specific focus questions:

What is it we need to do?

What existing resources should we build on?

What can be done without any new money?

The information generated through the forums was insightful, confirming and challenging. Overall, the community voice validated what we learned through the analysis of needs assessments already conducted for this population. The information from each forum was immediately posted on our web page and used to help promote the next forum. As themes began to emerge from the community voice, they were organized under the three strategic result areas promulgated in the Act and this was also posted on our web page.

The information given to and elicited from the group was not the only thing that was important. During the process people formed relationships and networks that will outlive the planning process. Also, after hearing the important information on the way the brain develops in the early years, many people realized that their behaviors needed to change now. And, this changing of behavior, this altering of the social norm as it relates to child development, will be the true test of how well Proposition 10 resources are applied in Placer County.

An Inclusive Strategic Planning Gathering

As we moved through the community learning conversations, we invited anyone who was interested to participate in a two-day strategic planning event held on March 31 and April 1. In addition, invitations were extended to a Results-Based Accountability Workshop held on April 26. Both of these gatherings were integral to the community-input phase of our planning process.

The two-day strategic planning event was designed by an advisory group representing Head Start, Child Care Advisory Council, United Way's Success By Six, Placer County Greater Collaborative, Prop. 10 TA Center, Department of Health and Human Services Community Health Division and the Placer County Office of Education Prevention Services Division. Sixteen hundred invitations were sent via mailing lists provided to the Commission from the Placer County Greater Collaborative, Child Care Advisory Council, Head Start, and the Placer County Office of Education. This was in addition to invitations sent to participants in the preceding community conversations. An open invitation was also published through paid advertisements in three separate newspapers, and posted on our web page.

The two-day strategic planning event was a tremendous success! Ninety-six people representing all stakeholder interests participated in developing a vision for this effort in Placer County. They also viewed the data from the "community voice" and various statistical reports. They identified broad goals under the three strategic result areas, and perhaps more importantly, people networked with each other around the specific topic of early childhood development. This has enhanced the already strong collaborative relationships that are necessary to build on current resources and meet the developmental needs of our children over the long term.

The information from the community conversations, the two-day strategic planning event, feedback received through our web site, and the analysis of existing needs assessments was used to develop this integrated plan.

The preceding information on the process used to develop this plan takes us to the present. Additional activities that will be chronicled and used for this story are:

- Upcoming Commission meetings to review and participate in creating the plan
- Bilingual community review meetings on the West Slope and in the Tahoe Region
- Comments received as a result of posting the plan on our web site.

AN INTEGRATED COUNTY-WIDE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The following section addresses the goals, objectives; services, outcomes and indicators proposed for Placer County's first Children and Families Commission integrated strategic plan.

The CFC selected a multi-disciplinary team to synthesize the data from the community forums and needs/assets assessments and develop strategies, benchmarks and performance measures that will help to realize our Vision. During the course of its work, the team realized that what we are looking for is not a whole new set of programs unleashed upon the community through a request for proposal process, but instead, an increase in the "*competencies*" required to build and sustain strong families and communities that provide a quality environment for our youngest children. Similarly, the community partners we engage to carry out the recommended strategies need to have the competencies, the knowledge and skills that are key to producing critical results.

The outcomes (changes in conditions and/or behaviors) we expect as a result of achieving these competencies are described under four interrelated domains:

- Improved Family Functioning – Strong Families
- Improved Child Development – Children Learning and Ready for School
- Improved Child Health – Healthy Children
- Comprehensive Child and Family Partnership Competencies

In each area, we have described several high impact or high leverage strategies, along with anticipated benchmarks we will measure on a community wide basis, as well as performance measures that can be used to gauge achievement of results at a program or consumer level. Each section follows this format:

Strategic Result – A broad goal to be achieved throughout the county.

Outcome – A condition and/or behavior that will exist as a result of activities or services funded or initiated through the CFC.

County-Wide Benchmark – Aggregate data to measure outcome achievement at the county level.

Recommended Strategies – Broad activities to achieve the CFC goals and outcomes.

Program Performance Measures – Data that will describe the activities funded by the CFC and the extent to which these activities are helping children and families achieve their desired outcomes.

The strategies in this plan are offered because they are grounded in proven approaches and supported by the “community voice.” They are not meant to preclude additional innovative and creative strategies offered by community partners or strategies that may reveal themselves during strategic implementation of this integrated plan.

STRATEGIC RESULT # 1: IMPROVED FAMILY FUNCTIONING – Strong Families and Support for Families

“Successful programs see the child in the context of family and the family in the context of its surroundings.” – Lisbeth Schorr, Within Our Reach

In order to improve family functioning and build strong families, Placer County must be able to support the healthy growth and development of each individual child and family. In part this support takes place through the provision of services, including but not limited to medical care, mental health/substance abuse counseling, mentoring/emotional support, health education, parenting education, quality child care, respite care, financial assistance, general life skills training and potential other services to be identified by the family itself. The CFC also supports the capacity of individual families, neighborhoods, and communities to create the means of sustaining healthy families. Activities that may contribute to this capacity include enrichment programs, parent networks, or community spaces that allow for play, celebration, and the building of relationships.

Many of these formal services already exist as part of the current Health and Human Services (HHS) system of the county and other community based service providers, and therefore do not require funding from the CFC. Some of these formal services do not exist or do not currently have the capacity to meet the demands of the general population. Our commission will work to provide improved linkages and collaboration with existing service systems as well as to develop and fund new service and support networks.

Many informal support networks and non-social service programs and activities also currently exist. A goal of this initiative will be to support expansion of these activities where the community desires them, and to support the capacity of families to generate new ideas and means of raising healthy and thriving children.

Services to children and families must be holistic and comprehensive. Often, only traditional services such as counseling, education and medical services are available. Consideration will be given to non-traditional services such as transportation assistance, home repair, auto repair, socialization, recreation and mentoring. From a sociological perspective, individuals and families have become more isolated, partially due to the high mobility of American society contributing to the breakdown of family-and neighborhood support systems. We need to recognize the importance of informal supports in family success and find ways of enhancing and building up these networks.

OUTCOME: Improved Family Competencies – All families will be supported in becoming more knowledgeable and competent in child nurturing, child interaction, child learning and parenting skills which promote positive child development.

County-wide Benchmarks

- Reductions in child abuse and neglect rates
- Increased rate of referral and treatment for early childhood behavioral concerns
- Decreased rate of kindergarten retention/ placement in transitional first grade
- Decreased teen birth rate
- Decrease in rates of substance abuse
- Decrease domestic violence rates
- Shorter duration and lower number of foster placements (0-5)
- Increased ratio of affordable housing stock

Recommended Strategies

- Raise family awareness of, and linkage to, family, community and neighborhood resources and support services
- Where necessary, provide access to Multi-Disciplinary Teams for post-birth support, consultation, training and education, assessment for long-term intensive service needs, linkage and follow-up

- Help families establish reasonable boundaries based on child development principles
- Help parents promote enjoyment of learning and demonstrate this to the child through reading, playing, and positive interaction
- Promote consistent caring relationships between parents/caregivers and children
- Promote positive family communication and problem-solving
- Promote positive family identity (self-esteem, hope for the future)
- Promote places for children to play that are age-appropriate and accessible
- Promote public gathering places for families to come together for celebrations, play and community building
- Build pre-parenting competencies among teen age children
- Teach child development and family functioning curriculum to students as older siblings and as future parents
- Establish a Special Commission fund for unique, one-time, or unusual approaches to assist families in supports/services not funded by any other source

Program Performance Measures

- Standardized instruments such as the Placer County Outcome Screening Forms and the Search Institute developmental assets survey
- Basic program data
- Community resource inventories

OUTCOME: Supportive and Nurturing Living Environment – The greater community will be supportive in providing safe, healthy and appropriate living environments for families which promote positive child development.

County-wide Benchmarks

- Reductions in child abuse and neglect rate
- Improved/sustained child health as indicated by children's health data
- Increased employer sensitivity to family needs
- Increase in available transportation through collaboration with the Placer County Transportation Commission and others
- Increase in affordable housing stock through collaboration with the Placer County Redevelopment Agency and others

Recommended Strategies

- Promote safe environments within the family, school, and community
- Promote extended families, family mentors and other family support networks
- Promote employer and employment programs that increase sensitivity and awareness of employee family issues.
- Promote affordable and desirable housing for all income levels
- Promote efforts to assist families in obtaining adequate financial resources to meet their basic needs
- Promote development of available transportation to meet family needs

Program Performance Measures

- Standardized instruments such as the Placer County Outcome Screening Forms and the Search Institute developmental assets survey
- Basic program data
- Increased housing subsidies available.
- Increased subsidies available for transportation and/or expanded transportation system
- More employers who support child care, family leave and other family-friendly policies
- Customer satisfaction survey (to be developed)

• STRATEGIC RESULT # 2: IMPROVED CHILD DEVELOPMENT – Children Learning and Ready for School

“Children are always the only future the human race has; teach them well.”

Many factors influence whether or not children are ready for school. Success begins with a healthy pregnancy including early and quality prenatal care. It continues with the parents' attention to the child's health including regular checkups and timely immunizations. Nutrition, including the choice to breastfeed an infant, also contributes to school readiness. Positive child development experiences are another important contributor.

Child development encompasses several interrelated areas that include physical, mental, social and emotional development. Children are deeply affected by their experiences, both physically and emotionally, and nurturing relationships are a powerful way to prevent problems later in life such as developmental delays and emotional disturbances. Young children grow and learn in response to the relationships they have with their parents and other primary caregivers. Brain development and physiological structures are formed during a child's early years and form the foundation for their future success in life.

Improved child development requires education. Not only do parents and childcare providers need to learn about the development of young children, the community must also be educated. The ages and stages that young children pass through and the developmental milestones they need to achieve should be common knowledge for all of us who interact with children and their families.

“The importance of preparing children to succeed ... is critical.... Skills that allow one to problem solve and think creatively are developed in early childhood education settings and nurtured through community and parental reinforcement” - California Children and Families Commission Guidelines

OUTCOME: All children will meet appropriate developmental milestones in cognitive, speech and language, fine and gross motor, self-help, and social-emotional areas.

County-Wide Benchmarks:

- Decreased rate of kindergarten retention/ placement in transitional first grade
- Decreased rate of children entering kindergarten with undiagnosed special need
- Increased rate of identified special needs children receiving special education
- Increased rate of new parents receiving home visitation

Recommended Strategies:

- Provide home visiting program for all new parents.
- Provide parent education on child development.
- Provide parent/child playgroups facilitated by a trained child development specialist.
- Reach out to existing play groups and parent's networks to offer resources and materials on child development, resources and material
- Provide high quality child care; preschool learning environments
- Provide developmental assessments for all children

Program Performance Measures

- Standardized instruments such as the Placer County Outcome Screening Forms, the Search Institute developmental assets survey and the University of Oregon Ages & Stages Questionnaire
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Other standardized assessment and measuring tools depending upon the family situation.

OUTCOME: All children are in nurturing environments that promote learning.

County-Wide Benchmarks

- Increase percentage of child care providers that meet quality child care standards
- Increased rate of parent satisfaction in finding special needs child care
- Increased proportion of organized recreation programs for families with children 0-5
- Increased rate of use - Placer County Office of Education Child Care Services toy and resource lending library
- Increased rate of access to child development training by child care providers, including relative and non-relative caregivers, and parents

Recommended Strategies

- Promote a stipend program for child care providers who meet pre-determined criteria.
- Promote a recruitment and training program for new providers, including providers who serve special needs and sick children.
- Promote startup assistance for new providers, including environmental safety, appropriate resources and materials.
- Promote outreach, training, support, resources and materials for all caregivers, i.e., a "home visiting program" for child care providers.
- Promote child development education program for parents.
- Promote recreation programs for parents and young children.

Program Performance Measures

- Number/percent of providers who qualify for stipends.
- Percent increase in the number of licensed child care spaces, especially spaces for children with special needs and for sick children.
- Number of new providers who receive startup assistance, including supplies, resources and materials.
- Increase in percent of providers who receive visits.
- Increase in number of parents who receive early childhood education training.
- Increased ratio of quality child care spaces measured by universally established criteria
- Increase in the proportion of families with children 0-5 who access programs in their Recreation District
- SEARCH Institute environmental assets surveys

STRATEGIC RESULT # 3: All Children Are Healthy

Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play, and love. Vicki Spannagel

The health and wellness of Placer County's children are a reflection of the quality of care for our most vulnerable residents. The Children and Families Commission broadly defines health and wellness to include all aspects of physical and mental health for children and their families. A child's health has multiple interrelated determinants. A healthy pregnancy is the foundation for a healthy child. A healthy child is the foundation for optimal development and learning. Adequate and quality nutrition is required for brain growth. The availability of a system of affordable preventive health and illness care assures a medical "home" for children. Consequently, children should receive a full complement of preventive health care, including immunizations. Also, a safe environment, both physically and emotionally, is required to provide children the opportunities to achieve optimal growth and development.

Children with special health care needs require the same basic health foundation for their growth and development. In addition, medical care, specialty care, early intervention services and family supports necessary to maximize the individualized developmental plans of children with special needs should be available and accessible throughout the county.

The overall health and wellness of a child cannot be isolated from the influences of the other strategic results addressed in this plan. The ability of parents/caregivers to develop consistent caring relationships, the safety of the environment, community values about children; and the availability of a continuum of family supports are necessary for children to thrive. The development of healthy children requires a comprehensive, integrated service system, including traditional health care, that supports families at multiple levels to optimize individual, family and community health.

OUTCOME: Family Wellness Competency

All families have the knowledge and ability to optimize the health and wellness of its members.

County-wide Benchmarks

Data available from birth and death certificates, hospital discharge data and health care insurance systems provide multiple benchmarks at the countywide level. These data are useful for describing the health of individuals and communities.

- Increased rate of women receiving early and adequate (as measured by the Kottelchuck Index) prenatal care including comparisons by race/ethnicity, place of residence, age, and payor source
- Decreased rate of infant mortality
- Decreased rate of low birth weight - and very low birth weight analyzed by race/ethnicity, place of residence, age of mother, payor source, adequacy of prenatal care
- Increased use of specialized child health services

- Increased rate of children receiving preventive health care services as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics
- Increased rate of mothers breastfeeding 6 weeks and 6 months after birth
- Increased rate of children 0-5 years and families receiving multidisciplinary services including mental health services
- Increased analysis of standardized county health data for rate increases/decreases in immunization data, hospitalizations for ambulatory care sensitive diagnoses, infant mortality, injury mortality and morbidity rates, other morbidity & mortality, rates of dental disease, and other health data.
- Decreased rates of preventable emergency room visits (note: may need to track numbers over time)
- Increased utilization rates for MediCal and Healthy Families
- Decreased rates of children living in poverty
- Decreased rates of families lacking health insurance
- Increased rate of providers who take children enrolled in MediCal or Healthy Families
- Increased net change in number of providers available including obstetricians, pediatricians, family practice physicians, dentists, speech therapists, infant/young child mental health specialists, physical therapists, occupational therapists and other specialty practitioners

Recommended Strategies

A variety of interrelated strategies are required to achieve the optimum physical and emotional development of children. Many of these strategies overlap with those required to achieve the other strategic results in this plan. Recognized elements of a comprehensive, integrated system promoting optimal health include:

- Promote continuous care for prospective mothers, from before they get pregnant through the postpartum period.
- Promote outreach to assure early entry into care for pregnant women and their children

- Provide adequate resources (both number of providers and finances) to assure that special health and developmental needs of infants/children are met
- Promote activities, which assure that children's nutritional needs are met including the promotion of a healthy feeding relationship.
- Provide breast feeding support for new mothers
- Provide activities and education intended to eliminate preventable hospitalizations
- Support efforts that provide parents health education information including injury prevention, anticipatory guidance, growth and development, etc.
- Provide a family support advice line
- Provide all children access to a full range of health services including medical, dental and mental health
- Promote multidisciplinary home visiting teams engaging all families from pregnancy through early childhood
- Develop specialized mental health providers and network for special needs children
- Support programs for children with special health care needs
- Provide outreach and enrollment in available health insurance programs (AIM, MediCal, Healthy Families, etc.)

Program Performance Measures

- Use of standardized tools such as Placer's Infant/Caregiver Outcome Screening Form and developmental screening tools
- Demographic information
- Data on services provided

OUTCOME: Healthy Environment – The setting within the home, neighborhood and community, which supports the health, development and sense of well being of a child. The environment includes the physical environment that is, for example, lead free, has safe drinking water, and appropriate for the child’s development (such as safety locks in the home or safe playgrounds in the community). It also includes the milieu – the emotional environment in which a child develops.

“Children value themselves to the degree that they have been valued.” Dorothy Corkille Briggs, Your Child’s Self-Esteem

County-Wide Benchmarks

- Decreased rate of infants born exposed to drugs as determined by a substance abuse prevalence study
- Decreased rates of tobacco use including rates of use by pregnant women
- Decreased rate of children tested with elevated blood lead levels
- Decreased rates of hospital admissions for asthma
- Decreased rates of family violence as identified during family violence study focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Decreased rates of child abuse and neglect
- Increased utilization rates of existing health and specialty resources

Recommended Strategies

- Promote tobacco cessation programs for parents and caregivers
- Promote systems/programs that increase community wide knowledge of health resources and health information
- Promote multidisciplinary team support to child care and child development providers
- Promote reduction in exposure to environmental risks such as tobacco smoke, substance abuse, and other unsafe environments.
- Promote reduction in the exposure of young children to violence including family violence, media violence, and community violence.

Promote health consultation visits/services to child care/development settings

- Promote health care provider training programs on brain development, early childhood nutrition, smoking cessation, and resources for referral and intervention
- Promote programs to increase the number of providers willing to serve families insured by MediCal or Healthy Families
- Promote programs to increase the number of specialty providers including infant/young child mental health specialists

Program Performance Measures

- Decrease in rates of illness in care settings
- Basic demographic information on families services
- Basic program data on services provided
- Increase in number of providers, specialty providers
- Increase in number of providers willing to serve MediCal, DentiCal, and Healthy Families insured children
- Increase in the proportion of primary care providers trained to screen and make referrals for mental health problems for infants and young children
- Increase in the proportion of primary care providers who routinely refer or screen infants and children for impairments of vision, hearing, speech, and language, and who assess other developmental milestones as part of well child care

STRATEGIC RESULT #4: A COMPREHENSIVE CHILD AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

The “*partnership*” is comprised of all communities, neighborhoods, employers, faith communities, resources, programs, families, professionals, volunteers, children, and people – EVERYONE – in Placer County.

OUTCOME: Partnership Competency - All families have access to a network of support through an integrated partnership of informal and formal care.

County-Wide Benchmarks

- Increased collaboration throughout the partnership
- Increased incidences of outcome based decision-making among all supports and services
- Increased satisfaction among all partners with the network of services and supports as determined through surveys and feedback
- Increased availability of and participation in child and family development training
- Increased use of a unified family-centered service plan among families receiving multiple structured services and supports
- Increased use of partnership wide confidentiality policy

Recommended Strategies

- Promote use of quality best practice models that have been evaluated and proven effective
- Promote innovation and creation of new approaches to serving and supporting children and families
- Promote policy and service delivery decisions that are outcome data driven
- Promote services that are fully participatory and driven by individual and family needs and assets.
- Promote the appropriate sharing of case information
- Promote the creation and use of a universal Management Information System to support integrated services among families that receive multiple services and supports
- Promote comprehensive and outcome focused evaluation strategies
- Promote use of Placer's comprehensive outcomes screens.
- Promote the use of an Interdisciplinary Family Team approach among families that receive multiple services and supports
-

Promote the value of children and child development throughout Placer County.

- Support family involvement in setting policy for County-wide child development issues
- Promote relationship building between the more traditional social and health services providers and less formal programs, groups, and structures that support the health and well-being of families
- Promote public meeting and activity spaces and forums that give families the opportunity to come together and build networks of support

Program Performance Measures

- Increased collection of program outcome data
- Increased individual outcome based decision-making
- Increased family participation in policy development
- Increased collaborative relationships between formal and informal partners
- Increased use of unified family-centered services and support plans among families that receive multiple services and supports
- Increased availability of public spaces for family activities
- Increase in the number of providers using Placer's comprehensive outcomes screens

TO BE "STRATEGIC" OUR APPROACHES MUST BE COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED

Ordinarily, families and children are supported and sustained in health and development through daily interaction within a network of friends, relatives, co-workers, neighbors and others throughout their community. These personal and community linkages help families stay together through difficult times and raise their children in healthy and nurturing environments.

Sometimes, however, families experience problems that cannot be resolved through ordinary community means. These families require special assistance from public or private organizations and agencies that provide a safety net of services intended to help restore families to health and wholeness.

Under the best of circumstances, these safety net organizations and agencies work with families to help them solve their problems and return to self-sufficiency within their family support network. Unfortunately, some families get stuck in the safety net that is supposed to help them because: they cannot overcome their problems; or the help they need is not available; or they become dependent on the safety net, or because the agencies that are supposed to help them cannot organize themselves in a way that helps.

A key concept of this Children and Families Strategic Plan is that Proposition 10 resources will be most helpful and effective if they are distributed and administered through a community-wide partnership. This partnership will involve formal agency services and informal or natural community supports that place the child and family at the center of an array of resources tailored to meet the specific needs of the whole family.

To better illustrate these concepts, imagine the following scenario...

A young family with a four-year-old and a newborn baby is experiencing a combination of personal, financial, and legal problems. They live in a rundown apartment complex and cannot save enough money to move to a better place. Dad only does piece work and is looking for full-time work and is also enrolled in CalWORKS. Mom just returned to work part-time at night as a waitress in order to make financial ends meet. Childcare is difficult to find due to fluctuating work schedules. Even though CalWORKS assists the family by paying for child care, the family has to choose friends (exempt care) to care for their children because licensed child care is not available when they need it. Dad is on probation for a DUI and attends mandatory weekly night classes. They don't have any discretionary money or savings and both mom and dad worry about some impending emergency, which they could not afford.

The parents are assigned a social worker from CalWORKS, a nurse from public health, a probation officer, and a child care resource specialist, all of whom have their own paperwork and expectations for the family. Often the instructions from one worker conflict with the instructions from another. Mom has been feeling depressed and anxious, since she gave birth 30 days ago. She has been trying to get an appointment at the Mental Health clinic but is on a six-week waiting list.

Under this scenario, the fragmented actions and requirements of the safety net may be holding back the family rather than helping them achieve or regain a place of health and wholeness in the community. Efforts to help are disconnected, limited, and place barriers in the way of the family.

In Placer County we want to assist families and children with multiple services and supports in a more coordinated manner in which everyone involved with the family works closely together as a family-centered team in order to help rather than overwhelm the family. One of our core beliefs is that families know what they need and services must acknowledge the wisdom and resources within the family and their surrounding community and enable the family to play a central role in achieving their own success.

An Interdisciplinary Family Team Approach When Families Require Special Assistance From the Formal Service System

To provide comprehensive and integrated services and supports to children and families experiencing serious problems Proposition 10 resources will be used to support families through an “Interdisciplinary Family Team” (IFT) approach. This team approach would engage professionals, paraprofessionals, community volunteers, relatives, friends, and neighbors in a variety of approaches spanning formal and informal services and supports such as Public Health, Social Work, Child Development, Community Support and Resources, Mentoring, Recreation, Faith and Family Advocacy.

The IFTs would be organized and operate through existing collaborative structures such as Birthing Centers, PCOE Resource and Referral Program, Head Start, Alta Regional Center, Women's Centers, Family Resource Centers, One-Stop Career Centers, Healthy Start Centers, and Child Care Centers and other key collaborative partners. These service centers already operate as "hubs" for multiple service provision at the neighborhood level.

The IFTs would be flexible teams that would expand their membership as necessary and appropriate for each family, especially for families with special needs children. Each family would participate as a full partner with the IFT to design a service plan that meets the family's specific needs, that builds upon the family's unique strengths, and that strengthens linkages between the family and the natural community resources that can sustain the family once they no longer require safety net assistance. The IFTs also would have access to a "flexible trust fund" that could be utilized to quickly purchase services needed by the family. The trust fund would be used to purchase such services as assistance with car repairs, obtaining safe, decent housing, respite child care and other non-traditional supports to families.

Now, imagine the same family scenario again within a comprehensive child and family partnership...

"A young family and their four year old and new born baby are thriving with support from an extensive network that includes friends, community groups and service providers. Their IFT nurse has been visiting the family for the past nine months. She has introduced the mom to other pregnant moms and after the birth these moms bring dinners to the family for the following two weeks. They also bring the family clothes and other baby things they might need. Dad is working only part-time and enrolled in CalWORKS. He recently met another dad through his basketball league who will be hiring a full-time worker and asked Dad if he is interested in the job. Mom works part-time as a waitress at night, but she found a woman who is willing to come to her home to watch her child. The woman plans to be a pre-school teacher and is currently taking classes in that field.

Mom trades produce from the community garden she participates in for the child care. The four-year-old attends the preschool program next door and dad is learning great ideas for fun ways to interact with his son by helping in the classroom. Because of the DUI, Dad is attending AA and has made a lot of new friends. Some of these buddies are coming over this weekend to help put in some new windows that will keep their apartment warmer. The family feels a lot less stress due to the coordination between all of the services they receive – all of the various agencies meet together and have simplified their paperwork down to one basic form. The family is excited for the future and happy about the new friends they have made. Mom is even helping to organize a clean-up day and family picnic in their apartment complex."

These two scenarios highlight the difference between fragmented and categorical single-agency services and a more comprehensive family-centered team approach that combines formal and informal supports and services to help the family achieve independence from the safety net system. It is a CFC priority that Proposition 10 resources be used to help families achieve self-sufficiency through comprehensive and holistic assistance, rather than perpetuate their dependence on single agency categorical services.

STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES

"Attention! Attention!

Here and now, boys!

Here and Now!"

Aldous Huxley - Island

We have learned through analysis and long term experience that most of the available funding for services are so "categorically mandated" that it is difficult to provide "flexible" services, which can be most responsive to the identified needs of the family. For example: State and Federal Substance Abuse funding is very prescriptive in its use, a typical grant from a federal or state agency will require that funding only be used if it's segmented so that 10% is for women, 10% is for prevention (substance abuse related only), and 5% is for HIV populations and the balance for treatment and recovery services. This segmenting of funding by its very nature promotes fragmentation in services.

This fragmentation is tough on the families and the people trying to serve them. We will achieve a different result in Placer County with Proposition 10 funds.

Additionally, it has been proven that the great majority of available funding is devoted to “deep end” treatment services, rather than prevention, early intervention and early childhood development and education. Therefore, it is crucial that we maintain the ability to use Proposition 10 funding in a very flexible manner and that we focus like a laser on prevention and early intervention. And, that we avoid attaching “overly prescriptive requirements” upon funding. We will use a variety of approaches in applying Proposition 10 funds to the achievement of our desired outcomes. A major strategy will be to engage our community partners through an action-oriented “*Request for Results*” application process. Funding will flow through at least three vehicles:

- Competitive
- Non-competitive
- Commission Initiated Strategies

The application process may involve an invitation to address a specific result area or it may be more general. Also, demonstration projects, research or, needs/assets assessments tied to the 0-5 population may be funded. Regardless of which approach is used, the principles that will guide this deployment process are:

- Results-based and genuine use of outcome data feedback loops
- Leverage funds to maximize Proposition 10 dollars
- Family Centered Wrap-Around Interdisciplinary Family Team Approach – Holistic
- Collaborative, inclusive and integrated system-wide approaches

Eligible Partners:

- Private Non-Profit 501 (c) 3
- Private For Profit
- Public Agencies
- Non-incorporated groups/organizations that have a legal entity as a fiscal sponsor

Types of Funding

- One-time only
- One-year
- Multi-year
- Investment

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DOMAINS

The Children and Families Commission is trying to do many things at once. We are engaging the community in an inclusive strategic planning process so that we can make the best use of our funds and achieve strategic results. We are educating the community to the importance of brain development in the first years of life, and the opportunities and challenges that knowledge presents for those interacting with our youngest children. And, we are trying to build the organizational capacity to run the Commission as a result-oriented organization in the years to come. Areas that the Commission will develop further as we move into the implementation and evaluation of our initiatives are:

- Adequate policy development and customer friendly administrative processes.
- Staffing and computer technology necessary for a results oriented organizational structure.
- On-going evaluation/analysis of CFC funded services using data to measure success or lack thereof. Ability to learn from this data and base funding and policy decisions on this learning.
- Building staff and commission capacity to offer assistance to providers and policy makers on how to reengineer work processes to a results based accountability system.
-

On-going community education and awareness (Parents, community members, providers) events to promote quality early childhood development so that we can turn the corner on changing the social norms needed to build and sustain family and community competencies. Especially as it relates to brain development 0-5. But, also as it relates to the burst or, "second wave" of brain activity that occurs long after the age of 3 or 5.

- Sound, aggressive investment, and leveraging strategies to maximize the Children and Families Trust Fund *into perpetuity*.
- The capacity to evaluate, and learn from the implementation of our plan.
- Continuously engagement of the community in upgrading the plan and authentic involvement of our customers relating to strategic planning.
- An on-going public relations program to promote the activities of the Commission and its partners and engage the community in sustainable early childhood development activities.
- Emissaries to liaison and develop a strong working relationship with the State Commission in order to complement, not duplicate each other's strategies, and protect this incredible resource we have been entrusted with on behalf of our children and their families.